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ABSTRACT

This 2-part report investigates the role of mass media in the lives of pre-school Scandinavian children. The first part presents a portrait of one child, giving a personal picture of the child's family life and her relationships to various forms of media. Part II continues the discussion of the role of media in children's lives, based on the observations and impressions of interviewers and on information obtained from the families of 50 randomly selected children. Topics covered include the situation of children, their use of television, the general effects of TV on children, parental attitudes toward TV, and the effects of TV on different types of children. The roles of radio and other forms of media are also discussed. A final section considers the need for child/parent interaction during and after various media presentations to reinforce positive effects and alleviate negative effects on the child. (RAO)

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No. 52 - 75/76

THE ROLE OF RADIO AND TV IN THE LIVES OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN.

SUMMARY

Leni Filipson

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This report is a short presentation of the project "The Role of Radio and TV in the Lives of Pre-school Children".

It is not an ordinary survey report presentating figures and complete results. Our point of departure has been 50 "portraits" of 50 randomly selected children. Each child's situation is unique. It has not been our purpose to create average children, because average children do not exist in reality. Instead we tried to find out what factors are most important in the interaction of children and broadcasting media.

Several interviewers have taken part in the study. Their impressions and observations have been summarized into "portraits" of the families studied. The portrait presented in this report is not complete: it is only a part of the information we have about the family concerned.

The interviewers have deliberately and on our demand, given a rather personal picture of the children and their families. This has made it more easy to separate the attitudes of the interviewers from other data. The analysis is made on the portraits as well as on verbal information from the interviewers. Additional information has also been given directly from the families to the project leader. Naturally some of the data about the families have been altered so that nobody should be able to identify the persons.

This survey was intended as an unconditional search for hypotheses. We discuss the problem of children and broadcasting, not in the hope of arriving at unambiguous solutions but in order to induce programme makers and others to think and to continue the discussion.

Eva, 5 years old

The Janssons, Britt, 36, housewife, and Erik, 35, construction worker, have one child, Eva, 5.

Erik works in Nacka (county adjoining Stockholm to the south-east). Britt has worked as an office clerk. She has been at home since Eva's birth.

The Janssons live in Alby, a newly developed suburb south of Stockholm. They moved there in 1973. Alby is a horrid place, an area simply reeking of contempt for mankind. It is 45 minutes by Underground from Stockholm Central Station. The area consists of eight-storey ochre-coloured buildings on a razed landscape. Not a tree in sight. Playground is enclosed in wire-mesh fencing, as is a small "exercising pen" for dogs. In fact, the only difference between the two "pens" is their size and a "jungle gym" in the former. Roughly half the flats in Alby are vacant. The flat on the first floor of the Janssons' building has been broken into and vandalized. Britt says that it is not unusual. That's what kids do here. There is nothing else to keep them occupied.

I had trouble finding the right address. Having wandered about for some time, I finally found the building. Some youngsters had apparently had fun switching all the address-signs around. I asked directions in a laundry-room and a small shop, both locked from the inside. Britt explained that they had to be kept locked; otherwise the Gypsies would come in and make a mess of them.

The Janssons live in a 3-room flat on the seventh floor. They pay about $225 or £120 a month in rent. It is a small flat, 73 m^2 (657 sq.ft.). There is a balcony off the kitchen. The kitchen faces out over the yard, where Eva plays. The flat is sparsely furnished and quite drab. The entry hall is of the same ochre colour as the facade. A grey rug. The hall is not furnishable, but a little chest of drawers stands against one wall, and above it hangs a mirror. A garland of plastic flowers is draped over the mirror. The hall opens straight on to the living room, which

is rather small, a long, narrow rectangle. White net curtains hang in the picture window. There are no potted plants. A few small ornaments. On the floor, of parquet, lies a grey rya-rug. Green sofa and matching arm-chairs, a ceiling lamp of metal and multi-coloured glass. A book-case containing very few books, a television set. On the TV a lace doily and a vase with a plastic flower. On the floor, a handsome copper tub with a hibiscus plant. Two rather artless paintings adorn the walls. The bedroom is totally grey and white. A large double bed dominates the entire room. The walls are bare.

Eva's room is small, but cheerful. Perfectly square. On the floor a bright yellow rug. An orange bed-spread. Orange curtains. A little white work-table. A small sewing machine. Quite a few books, a stack of comic books, mostly Donald Duck. A tape-recorder and a small accordion. A doll carriage and bed. Eva's bed is literally covered with dolls of all sizes. No less than 16 dolls, it turns out. Eva's room is a little topsy-turvy and "looks lived in". Otherwise, the entire flat is very tidy. The kitchen is large enough to accommodate a dining table. Again, the same ochre colour.

Britt is a small woman. She is medium-blonde with silvertoned streaks in her hair. She is dressed in black: black sweater, black slacks. Several chain necklaces, four or five gold bracelets, several rings. Elaborate maquillage, both lipstick and eye-shadow. Eva is a long-legged little girl. Medium-brown hair done up in long "pony-tails". She is wearing a striped frock, brown tights, a yellow sweater.

We sit in the kitchen, talking. Britt relates that she comes from Köping, and Erik from Gimo (communities not too far from Stockholm, but in different directions). Britt came to Stockholm 14 years ago. She felt Köping was too small and had trouble finding work there. She met her husband here in Stockholm at a dance.

The Janssons own a car. Erik takes the car to work every other week. Alternate weeks he rides to work with a friend, so that

Britt thus has a chance to use the car alternate weeks, as well. When they have the car, Britt and Eva usually go shopping in Södertälje or Skärholmen [1] together with Britt's cousin, who also lives in Alby. Britt can't recall when she was in Stockholm last. "We usually end up driving to Södertälje instead. It's so much closer."

Britt and Eva's day begins at 7:30 AM. Britt starts the day by making the beds, and then they eat breakfast together. Erik rises at 6:00; he starts work at 7:00. When Britt and Eva have eaten, Eva goes out to play. "Weather permitting", otherwise she stays at home. Eva is out-of-doors until noon, when she and Britt eat lunch. Then, she goes out again and stays outside until 5:00 PM, when the family eat dinner. Eva is not allowed outside after 5:00. Television comes on the air at 5:30, and Eva goes and watches TV. Britt does all the talking. When I direct my questions directly to Eva, she just looks at me, but says nothing. Eva stays up until Erik and Britt go to bed. They have always had trouble persuading Eva to go to bed. Britt and Erik usually retire around 9:30-10:00 PM. Saturdays a bit later, Britt adds.

Eva plays in the yard directly outside the entry to their building. Britt can keep an eye on her at all times. As much as one can see from the seventh floor, she adds. At least I can see that she doesn't leave the yard. When I ask Eva what kind of games she plays, Britt answers that she "watches over other children". Eva is still silent. They fight, too, says Britt. She relates that Eva usually says, "I never fight with them, they are the ones who fight with me." Eva has one friend whom she sees often, her 7-year-old cousin in Alby. Down in the yard she has Anders, 3 years. Eva's "lover", as Britt calls him. Eva keeps an eye on

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1) Södertälje: a coastal city approx. 30 km. south of Stockholm. Pop. approx. 70,000.
Skärholmen: a nearby suburb of Stockholm, site of one of Scandinavia's largest shopping centres.

Anders, so he doesn't leave the yard. When the weather is bad, Eva plays at home. She is seldom in the home of any play-mate. She plays with her dolls, especially her favourite, Elsa. Britt has taught Eva how to knit. Eva runs and gets a little scarf she is working on. When ske plays with her dolls, she pretends that she and her dolls are going to visit their grandmother in Köping. They pack their bags and get all dressed up. All 16 dolls and herself. The important thing for Eva, Britt says, is to be able to play down in the yard. It is dreary when it rains, and they can't think of anything to do. The thing that makes Eva sad is when Mama is angry. What "three things she would like to have" she doesn't want to say, and Britt doesn't know.

Eva doesn't attend nursery school or kindergarten. She could have started this year, but Britt thought it might be too much for her: "She can take it easy this year, since next year she'll be going to the obligatory kindergarten." Eva once attended a children's workshop (paper, paste, painting, etc.) arranged by the Workers' Educational Association. But this term she hasn't done that, either. Britt would like Eva to begin jazz-ballet lessons when she starts school. Britt would like to learn to dance herself, but she has never got started. Something else always comes up.

Britt is hard to get a grip on. She is very friendly and co-operative, but I have to pry everything I want to know out of her. Erik plays soccer or goes bowling a couple of nights a week. Britt works one night a week as check-out cashier in a neighbourhood market. Erik stays home with Eva. Britt also helps her sister, who works as charwoman on a building site.

The family are away from home one evening a month, at the most. They seldom have guests in their home. When they do, it is Britt's cousin's family in Alby. Britt has no close friends in the area. There was a housewife in the building opposite, but she and her family moved to Skåne (southernmost Sweden). Britt says that she always sees "some woman from the building" when she goes to the shop, but she doesn't care to talk to people, she says. "I rather prefer to keep to myself."

The Janssons lived in Handen earlier, but they were very unhappy there. We put up with it three years, Britt says with a sigh. When I ask whether they are happy in Alby, she just shakes her head. Although it is better than Handen, she adds. She gazes out at the ochre facade of the neighbouring building and says, "This is no way to live, is it?" Britt and Erik are on the community waitinglist for a home of their own. They have been offered several houses, but none of them have been appealing. One of them was a small house with garden in Alby, but they did not want to take it because there have been so many burglaries in the area, Britt explains. "We have had other offers, as well, but we just haven't been able to make up our minds."

All the while we sit and talk, Eva sits quietly watching me. I ask Britt whether she has considered taking care of any children in the neighbourhood during the days. She has given it a thought, she says, but feels that it is too great a responsibility. She hasn't dared. She says that she is hardly satisfied with her situation . She would like very much to start working again, but there isn't a day-care centre for Eva. There are several large day-care centres in Alby, but they are closed, for lack of personnel. As to trying to change her situation, Britt just shrugs her shoulders.

The family celebrate major holidays like Christmas, Easter and Whitsun (Pentecost) in the home of Britt's parents in Köping. Britt and Erik own a camping trailer, and they travel quite a bit with it. Britt's dream is to visit the Mediterranean. Erik doesn't want to, though. He'd rather go fishing somewhere. The Janssons often make outings into the forest, picking berries and mushrooms.

This past Sunday Erik and Eva went to the cinema. They saw "Dunderklumpen" (a feature-length animated film). Eva didn't think it was very good. Once before, Erik and Eva went to see "Emil's pranks" (feature-length film after children's book by Astrid Lindgren). Erik liked it very much. Last summer they visited Skansen (open-air museum in Stockholm) and Stockholm's Tivoli.

Otherwise, they don´t make many such outings. They never go to museums or exhibits. It seems tiresome, Britt says.

Britt and Erik hope that Eva will grow up to be an honest and responsible person. Otherwise, they have no specific ambitions for her. Eva likes to play the accordion, and they would like her to learn to play more if possible. Britt once played, so she hopes Eva will continue when she starts school. The biggest problem with Eva is that she won´t go to bed evenings. They have tried everything, but she just won´t. So, now she stays up until Britt and Erik retire for the evening. That means, of course, that Britt and Erik never have a moment to themselves. Britt and Erik have to talk about anything they want to discuss privately in bed.

Eva is absolutely forbidden to leave the yard outside her building. And she has never done so. Now and then Eva may get a light spanking for some mischief or other, but it doesn´t happen very often. Eva is sitting hiding her face in a dish-towel, playing with her hair, but says nothing. Asked what she thinks of Eva´s age, Britt says that children are children, and that every age has its problems. For the moment Britt feels that the main problem is clothes: Eva wears out her clothes so quickly.

Eva is together with Mama and/or Papa constantly, so one can hardly say they don´t give her enough time, Britt says. What they don´t want Eva to hear is when they talk about any of the neighbours. Children talk so much, and we don´t want Eva running around telling other children what we´ve said about the Carlssons, for example.

I take Eva´s development as it comes, Britt explains. Don´t urge Eva on in any way. She can write her name and ours, she says. Eva runs after paper and pencil and writes her name in neatly printed letters. She shows me her work proudly. Eva likes to draw and paint, "wherever she got that from", says Britt. "I can´t even draw a straight line." Britt says that she has started correcting Eva when she makes errors in grammar or choice of words.

She thinks it may even be a good idea not to teach Eva too much before she starts school. Otherwise, she might find school boring. It's better to start from scratch. Britt finds Eva a bit too curious sometimes and has trouble answering all her questions. According to Britt, Eva is just full of questions.

Britt or Erik read to Eva every night, either Donald Duck or some children's story. Eva usually buys little story-booklets that only cost one crown. They contain rhymes and stories that are easy to read and understand. While we are talking, Eva suddenly shows me her teeth. She wants to show me that she has had a tooth pulled, Britt explains. Eva fell down one day and hit her chin. One tooth was badly bent out of position so that it had to be pulled. After several hours' silence Eva asks what time it is.

Eva plays with other children practically every day. A couple of hours in the morning and a couple of hours in the afternoon. The worst she can think of is when it rains and she can't go down into the yard. Britt says Eva seems to have an easy time making friends with other children. The adults she meets are relatives, whom she already knows. So, of course, she has no trouble talking to and being together with them. Of the two of them, Britt thinks that Eva has a better relationship with her father, Erik, but she thinks that is because Eva has more fun with her father since when they are alone together, they go to the cinema or do something special, while Mama is more "everyday". Eva is allowed to bring her play-mates home, but it doesn't happen very often, Britt says. The children don't visit each other's homes; they just play in the yard. Eva's cousin visits them quite often. He is a little older than Eva, but they get on well together.

Britt finds Eva very active and impulsive and "probably the most stubborn child on Earth". She can hold to her own opinion for ages, and when she has made up her mind, it just has to be that way. Eva's strong will and stubbornness are a problem; Britt will do one thing, and Eva another. Eva strikes me as an extremely quiet, calm and rather passive little girl. She seems tired, which she may well be if she is up until 10:00 every

night. In other words, Britt's and my impressions contrast sharply.

Eva suffered of fever cramps as an infant and was hospitalized several times. Her parents haven't noticed any after-effects of her hospitalization. Sometimes Eva wants the lamp left on in the hall, but that is all, and it is no doubt only because of something she's seen on TV, Britt adds.

Britt thinks that television is good for children, but she thinks there is too much violence and sex, and all too early in the evening. There is plenty of time for such things after 10. There is too much drinking and narcotics, too, for that matter. When Eva has been frightened by something she's seen on TV, she sometimes awakens in the middle of the night and wants to sleep with Mama and Papa.

Of children's programming Eva's favourite is "The Globe"[1] with Tage Danielsson. When I ask Eva if there is any programme she likes, she answers after a long silence. (She is lying under the table, so I can't see her.) She mentions a programme she calls "Magnus". I'm not sure which programme that is, but I think she must mean "Five ants are more than four elephants" (original Swedish series that introduces reading, writing and counting skills). It's a good thing for TV, Britt explains, because Eva is not allowed to go out after dinner, and since TV comes on the air at 4:30, there is never any argument. Britt doesn't know very much about children's television programmes; she never watches them together with Eva.

Eva often falls asleep in front of the TV-set, since she is up so late. Erik and Britt are quite agreed in their choice of programmes. The British series "The Onedin Line", a late-night talk-show and a couple of Swedish dramatical series are family favourites . Eva watches them, too. If there is too much sex or violence, they simply switch off the set and refrain from watching the show. Eva often copies what she sees on TV. If there is live music, she runs and gets her accordion and guitar.

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1) "The Globe" is the title of a school-TV series for the lower primary grades, which treats various aspects of human behaviour.

Eva likes programmes with songs and "doing things" in them, Britt says. Britt and Erik watch TV "because it's there". Britt finds debates and discussions interesting. She'd rather watch a debate than a film. She is "neither for nor against" politics. Neither she nor Erik is politically active.

Eva gets so very angry if she isn't allowed to watch, so it's just as well she gets to watch TV until she falls asleep or until the programme schedule comes to an end. Occasional Saturdays the family eat their evening meal in front of the set. But only on Saturdays, although maybe, Britt adds, now and then for "Sveriges Magasin" (an early evening week-night talk-show). Britt is quite convinced that children can be frightened by TV-programmes, but then it's only a matter of switching off the set, she feels.

Eva watches television every day, from the first children's programmes in the late afternoon/evening until the programme schedule has come to an end or she has fallen asleep. Or until she finds it boring, like during the evening news and news commentary programmes (7:30-8:00 on TV2 , 9:00-9:30 on TV1). Every day Eva asks when the children's programmes come on and asks Britt to let her know when the time has come. She switches on the set herself. (The Janssons have black- and white TV.) I get no answer when I ask Eva to tell me about the programmes she watches. Just silence. Britt excuses her, saying she probably doesn't remember. Neither does Britt know which adult programmes Eva likes best, since she watches practically everything. Eva can't always distinguish reality from fantasy, says Britt. She doesn't really know the difference. Eva started watching television from the time she could make out images on the screen. At first, of course, it was just moving pictures. Exactly when she began taking an interest in the programmes, Britt doesn't know. She says it's hard to say. Eva likes to sit in front of the set, even if there's nothing of interest to her. She has a doll or a magazine or her knitting, so it's hard to say when she's watching and when she isn't, says Britt. One programme that Eva thought was "scary" was "Elephant Boy" (an English series). After watching it she awakened in the middle of the night and wanted to climb in bed with Mama. She had dreamt that something awful had happened to

an elephant. Britt, too, feels that "Elephant Boy" is always "a little scary".

We have had a TV-set as long as I can remember, says Britt. We've never been without a TV. The two-channel system doesn't pose any problems. Now and then Britt and Eva have to give in for a sports event. Otherwise, it is Eva who gets her way most of the time. To avoid a fuss.

Eva usually switches on the radio to listen to a 15-minute children's programme in the morning, but that is the only radio programme she listens to regularly. Otherwise, the radio is tuned in to P3 ("Melody Radio"), and Eva listens if and when there is anything that interests her. Britt just listens to the music (popular "Schlager" tunes, the Top Ten, etc.). Erik likes to listen to all kinds of sports events on the radio: ice hockey, tennis, soccer.

TV is the main reason they don't listen to the radio more, Britt explains. The set is switched on all the time. But P3 is the only channel they listen to.

Eva hasn't learned to read yet, but Britt and Erik read aloud for her. But they never read any book on their own. There's never time. Erik may read a book from time to time, a detective story in that case. Eva's grandfather gave her a tape-recorder, and she plays cassettes with children's stories. She can operate the recorder herself. Consequently, they don't buy very many books, mainly cassettes, instead. She plays her favourite tapes over and over again.

Britt and Erik read the newspapers Dagens Nyheter (Independent Liberal morning daily, Sweden's largest) and Aftonbladet (Social-Democratic evening tabloid). Erik reads the papers most. Britt does the crossword puzzles and reads the comics. Eva also likes the comics. Erik reads the paper from beginning to end; Britt more or less thumbs through DN in the morning. Britt usually buys Damernas Värld (women's weekly), it depends on the news-bills.

She likes the puzzles. Eva buys Donald Duck regularly. Erik buys a sports magazine regularly, and occasionally a magazine featuring practical mechanics.

Only rarely do the Janssons go to the cinema or theatre. Britt can't remember when. Erik takes Eva to the cinema sometimes, but Britt doesn't go along. Instead, she usually helps her sister clean at the building site. The family haven't a grammophone.

Britt is very "sophisticated" in appearance, well made-up with eye-shadow and lipstick, bright red nails, lots of jewelry. Whether or not it is because of my visit, I don't know. Eva, on the other hand, is a little "tattered". She is dressed in hand-me-downs that she's slightly outgrown. Britt seems kind and gentle, but is hard to reach. I'm not sure whether everything she says really reflects reality. Sometimes it shines through. Like when she talks about the neighbourhood. Then she is absolutely resigned and disillusioned. It is impossible to be happy in such surroundings.

Britt and I talk a bit about Gypsies, and Britt reveals a lot of aggression during our conversation. Racial prejudices that she repeatedly stresses she doesn't have. Aggressions must heap up inside a person in a milieu like this. A grey world, offering no activities. During the day the whole area is populated with housewives, most of them unwilling housewives, children, and a handful of misplaced pensioners. Both Britt and Eva seem apathetic, seem to find it hard to escape their situation. Britt says several times that she would like to leave greater Stockholm, but both she and I are aware that it will probably never happen. The initiative is lacking. They have also considered buying a house, but there has always been something wrong with the houses they've been offered.

It is hard to break out of such an environment. I feel sorry for Britt and Eva, for they really are unhappy here, but they seem to have no choice. Their whole attitude - toward me, toward their surroundings - is a little warped, a little afraid, they feel they must be on their guard. I find it hard to sum up my perceptions of Britt, Eva, of their home, their surroundings. The impressions are too strong.

THE ROLE OF RADIO AND TV IN THE LIVES OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Although the first years of life are the period when people are supposed to be particularly amenable to influence, we still know very little concerning the influence of the broadcasting media during the pre-school years, due among other things to the difficulties involved in the measurement of different kinds of effect.

An accurate picture of the importance of broadcasting media to children cannot be obtained by measuring children in isolation. Consideration has to be given to the total situation of children. There is a constant process of interaction between TV, radio and other influences. The total situation of children decides the use they make of radio and TV and the way in which they receive programme content.

Earlier studies of children and broadcasting have for the most part been limited in that data have been collected via parents or contact between radio and TV and children has been studied in comparative isolation from other phenomena in the children's surroundings.

In this survey our aim has been to arrive at an unrestricted total picture of each child and its surroundings in which it is growing up. Starting with this total picture, we wish to try to understand the importance of radio and TV to children in different environments and with different personal resources, as well as the factors determining how pre-school children use radio and TV and how different children are affected. We also wish to try to elucidate the role which other mass media play in children's lives.

We visited 50 randomly chosen families in two places in Sweden, a big city and a small town. We saw their homes, we talked to the parents and their children, and we observed the way in which

they interacted. The interviews were not structured, but they covered the same problem areas in all families. We spent between 4 and 8 hours in each family. Sometimes the whole of this time was taken up by one visit, in other cases we paid more than one visit.

THE SITUATION OF THE CHILDREN

In recent years children's programme units all over the world have concentrated more and more on efforts to improve the conditions and development of children. In order to be able to play as active a part as this, however, one needs to know more about the situation of children and the way in which TV and radio influence children living in different conditions. We speak in general terms of children who "lack resources" and are " understimulated", as if they were a special target group. Unfortunately, it is hard to give an exact definition of these terms.

One way of defining human living standards is in terms of "the access of the individual to resources (in money, possessions, knowledge, physical and mental energy, social relations, security etc.) with the aid of which he can control and direct his living conditions. But a definition of this kind is not entirely relevant to small children. The biggest 'resource' owned by children is the people who devote time and interest to them, primarily their parents, but also other people and institutions that children come into contact with".[1)]

In this way the resources of small children are a rough reflection of the resources of their parents, but there may be positive or negative differences between the two, depending on other phenomena in a child's surroundings.

Most people in Sweden have a relatively high material standard of living. This is reflected by the good physical health of

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1) SOU 1975:30 (The Swedish Government Official Reports) "The Child's Milieu"

Swedish children. But although few children in Sweden suffer material deprivation and although Swedish children are the healthiest in the world, there are children even in Sweden who grow up in difficult circumstances. There are signs that the mental health of children is deteriorating all the time. Drastic expressions like "mental cruelty" are used, the implication being that many children look in vain to their parents and to the rest of society for love and interest.

Is the spiritual climate of Sweden as cold and harsh as some would have us believe? Has too much of a premium been put on intellectual skill while qualities such as imagination and sensitivity have been pushed to one side? Have radio and TV actually contributed towards such a development? Have we concentrated too one-sidedly on knowledge as a means of competition instead of as a means of co-operation? Do parents care too little about their children or do they care about them in the wrong way?

A child needs stimulus in many different fields in order eventually to be able to function in society. Apart from purely physical training, the child needs <u>emotional</u>, <u>intellectual</u> and <u>social</u> stimulus. Different children need different forms of stimulus, not only different quantities of stimulus - depending on their inherent resources, their personalities and their surroundings. The living conditions of parents and their personal resources in different fields do a great deal to determine their ability to stimulate their own children. The support given by other people and the community in general to the parents' efforts is another important factor. We will try to define our interpretation of the term stimulus.

<u>Intellectual</u> stimulus means developing one's capacity for thought. Making constructive use of one's knowledge and experience both in practical life and in one's imagination. Many people limit intellectual stimulus to a pure "school mentality" and the learning of facts, and many parents maintain that children should not be taught such things as reading, writing and counting before they start school. They also maintain that the responsibility for

children learning things the right way rests with schools and not with themselves.

But intellectual training is perhaps more a matter of learning to think in terms of cause and effect and learning to apply one's stock of knowledge to the solution of problems and to the acquisition of new experience. Thought does not need to take place on an abstract plane, because pre-school children think in concrete terms. Thinking must be adapted to the development level of each individual, so that the child itself can feel that it understands and is making progress.

Social stimulus implies an opportunity of meeting different environments and situations, meeting people in different surroundings , people of different ages and people with different functions and different kinds of experience. It also means learning to adjust to different surroundings oneself and learning to adjust to other people. Above all it means having a sense of one's own function in a society where most people are far removed from natural functions and natural production. Social training also includes learning to cope with various practical situations - going shopping, making a phone call, asking the way, going to the library and so on.

Emotional stimulus is perhaps less easy to define. To a great extent it is this form of stimulus which gives the child a sense of its intrinsic value, a sense of its own identity. How is this achieved?

"It is vitally important to children to encounter love and care, this being the basis of the whole of their future lives." Love and care and interest - from parents and also from the children's surroundings generally. The fact that a child is wanted when it is born is no guarantee of its subsequently receiving love and care from all directions. Nor is the mere reception of these things enough: the child must feel that it receives enough love and care to be able to pass on a certain amount to others.

It is not only the child's feelings towards itself but its attitude towards other people and towards the whole of its environment that have to be established. In this context the child is dependent on its own experiences of other people and on the value put on other people in its surroundings. The child's understanding of other people has to be developed. The child's capacity for co-operation and tolerance are dependent on its fundamental attitude to itself and others.

To this one might add one more dimension - an extension of the forms of stimulus mentioned above. Creative ability, creative thinking, unconventional thinking, free association, imagination or whatever one chooses to call it. Small children who have not yet been shaped by the living patterns of their surroundings often possess this type of thinking capacity. Adults, with their frequently formalized thinking habits, seldom realize the importance of encouraging and stimulating this quality.

A constant interplay and balance between different forms of stimulus is desirable and necessary throughout childhood and, indeed, throughout the life of the individual. But reality sometimes falls very short of the ideal.

Are there any "under-stimulated" children in our families? The intellectual and social pattern is quite easy to investigate, the emotional climate less so. All parents know that they should be fond of their children, and they are not very much inclined to exhibit shortcomings in their relations with their children or with other people. But one can still spot a difference between a spontaneous interest in some homes in being together with the children and, in other homes, what appears to be more a sense of duty.

In many of the families investigated there occurs an intellectual training which may be unconscious. This is noticeable, for instance, from the way in which children are prepared for new tasks. The way people describe how and why they do things. It is noticeable from a way people have of associating on the basis

of things they are doing at a particular moment and allowing their thoughts to run freely. One finds that a great deal is bound up with the ability of employ language as the handmaid of thought.

In common with previous surveys, this one shows that the more educated parents are, the more intellectual stimulus they give their children, as a rule. They tend more often to explain things to their children in terms of cause and effect, and they generally have less difficulty in putting their thoughts into words and so communicating them to their children. At the same time, because they frequently occupy themselves with their children, the latter acquire a sense of their importance and their self-esteem is reinforced. But it can also happen that these parents make excessive demands on their children, expect too much of them and go too far in encouraging intellectual ability, in which case their attentions have the opposite effect.

Social training is often deficient. Many children spend the whole of their childhood in a very constricted area. Even if they live close to a big city, they are not able to benefit from its variegated amenities. On the other hand our results show that children often learn at an early stage how to cope with their immediate environment. They are let out at an early age to fend for themselves and establish their own contacts. In this way children are often less isolated than their parents. But they have few if any adult contacts. In the yards of their homes and even in nursery schools and day nurseries, they meet only a small number of adults.

Emotional stimulus is discernible in the spontaneous interest shown by parents in their children and the way they treat their children - whether they answer the children's questions, whether they accept the child's emotional manifestations and so on.

The living conditions of each individual child are determined by the availability of various forms of stimulus, together with its inherent abilities and the resources of its family. There

are many different groups of children with many different sets of circumstances. The worst conditions, for example, applied to the child in our survey who lived in an environment of low socio-economic status and who moreover had little contact with the world at large, lacked every form of stimulus and, in common with the people in its immediate surroundings, had a poorly developed self-awareness. Another child with roughly the same inherent abilities but enjoying good emotional stimulus would be in a far better position.

A child coming from a home with high socio-economic status, even if its parents are uninterested, is probably still better off than a child who is similarly placed but whose parents are poorly educated and economically hard up. In this way we can observe differences of degree in the circumstances of our child population which are not due to a handful of identifiable factors but are the product of a whole network of interdependent phenomena. We will never be able to define these groups exactly or ascertain the size of one or the other of them. But whenever we discuss the effects of a programme, we must bear in mind that such groups exist.

Lack of stimulus in different sectors can have different effects on different children. For instance, when a child has difficulty in learning to read, this can just as well be a sign of emotional disturbances and lack of self-esteem as of deficient ability, unfamiliarity with thinking in such terms or simply poor concentration or motivation.

The pre-school years are perhaps the most receptive period in a person's life. Many people maintain that this is when the opportunity should be taken of teaching the child as much as possible - reading, counting and so on. There can be dangers involved in leading parents to suppose that children must be taught as much as possible at all costs, because this can only too easily result in a one-sided rote learning of facts. Instead one should emphasize that the important thing is the quality of what is learned.

One is never too old to learn, but because children are more receptive during these ages, they are easily stimulated. Ideally, one form of stimulus should always be integrated with all the other forms. Nevertheless, some things are more important than others to pre-school children, namely emotional stimulus and practice in the pursuit of thought. The main consideration is not to impart a maximum of facts but to teach children to make use of their knowledge. The fostering of the child's self-esteem is closely bound up with its emotional contact with its surroundings, with its sense of being accepted, and also with its perception of a meaning in its own situation.

CHILDREN'S USE OF TV

TV and radio form part of the child's immediate surroundings, and the results of this survey show that, the more confined a child's horizons are, the greater importance TV tends to assume. We already know that TV ownership is practically 100% in Swedish families where there are children. Nearly 60 per cent of these families have colour sets, especially families with parents of low educational status.

The range of TV programmes has been drastically widened during the past ten years, and this applies perhaps pre-eminently to children's programmes. A second TV channel was introduced in 1969, but children's programmes are usually timed in such a way as to be exempt from the usual competition between the two channels. Generally, therefore, children's viewing of children's programmes is determined by other factors than inter-channel competition.

Since we are in a position to make direct comparisons of the viewing of pre-school children in 1964 and 1972, we can see how the change in the volume and range of broadcasting has influenced their use of programmes. Whereas the volume of children's broadcasting tripled during this period, viewing only doubled. On the other hand the structure of children's viewing has changed in that children now tend to watch children's broadcasts to a greater extent than previously. They have cut down their viewing of other programmes, especially news programmes with commentaries.

Ten years ago, pre-school children watched TV for an average of 43 minutes a day (this figure refers to families with TV sets). By 1972 the average had risen to 98 minutes. Viewing fluctuates quite considerably from one day of the week to another, but even on weekdays most pre-school children spend over 1½ hours watching TV. On Saturdays and Sundays half of them watch TV for 2½ hours or more. TV consumption has presumably increased still further since 1972.

Although in theory children's broadcasting could cater for the whole of the children's viewing time, in practice only about half of it is utilized and, oddly enough, the proportion of children watching only children's programmes (40 per cent approx.) is roughly the same among three-year-olds as among eight-year-olds. No children in these age groups watch adult programmes all the time. We shall take a somewhat closer look at the children's actual selection of programmes and the factors determining that selection.

The scope of consumption, great or small, is <u>one</u> way of measuring the significance of TV to children. We know that viewing increases with age right up to 12 years. Practically none of the 5 and 6-year-olds in our survey could be called low consumers, while on the other hand several 3 and 4-year-olds are. But age does not explain everything. Families whose children spend a lot of time watching TV have other features in common as well.

We know that children tend on the whole to imitate their parent's viewing habits. For instance, the children of poorly educated parents spend more time watching TV than the children of highly educated parents. We also know that, even during the pre-school years, boys watch more TV than girls do.

It is hard to find any clear reason in our survey why a 3 or 4-year-old should become a <u>high consumer</u>. Perhaps one should not really call them consumers: perhaps they just happen to be in front of the TV set when the programme is on.

The reason for this surmise is that the small children in this survey who spend a lot of time "watching" TV all have one thing in common. Either they are allowed to watch TV until it closes down, or else they go to sleep on the sofa while the rest of the family are watching. These children never have any special bedtime procedure, for example with somebody reading to them or with some other ritual being followed.

The parents of these children do not see anything wrong in their being allowed to fall asleep in front of the TV; they consider it to be perfectly natural. Generally their attitudes to TV and its possible effects are completely uncritical. Even if some of them have observed that the children's TV viewing has had certain negative consequences, they still do nothing, for instance, to keep the children away from frightening programmes: "J. often has nightmares, but it's only the telly".

The heavy consumers among the children in our families watch both children's programmes and programmes for adults. Whereas they are nearly always alone - or sometimes together with brothers and sisters or friends - when they see children's programmes, they are almost invariably together with adults when they watch adult programmes. There are no special restrictions on their choice of programmes. But it is by no means certain that a child who is a heavy TV consumer is dependent on TV itself: instead it may well be dependent on the "community" in front of the TV set.

Low consumers among the children investigated, those who spend less than 1½ hours a day watching TV or who do not even watch TV every day - which children are they? In most cases they are children who only watch the children's programmes, especially the programmes for the very young. As we saw earlier, age does not determine whether children confine their viewing to children's programmes. Instead there is a close connection between low TV consumption by children and parental TV consumption and, most important of all, parental attitudes to the children's viewing. One finds that the parents of low consumers take an active interest in their children, have firmer principles of child

rearing and a more specific set of goals for themselves and the family.

Another dimension which is perhaps more important than the actual scope or duration of viewing is the child's dependence on and bondage to TV. How does the child regard viewing in relation to other activities?

Dependence - bondage can be measured via the priority which the child itself accords TV in actual situations of choice and also via the child's reaction if for one reason or another it misses a TV programme. Is the reaction always the same, whatever the programme?

Not even parents always know whether a child is dependent on TV or not, because they have never disappointed their children by failing to tell them when it is time for a children's programme or by forbidding them to watch a programme for adults. Many families with children have such fixed habits that they seldom miss a TV programme, and they are more than willing to adjust their habits to fit in with the TV programmes.

This survey shows that playing outdoors, alone or with friends, is practically the only thing that can regularly prevail over watching TV. This is particularly the case with programmes broadcast during the daytime and at 4.30, when most children are out playing, at least during the time of year when it is still light. But other appreciated activities like associating with adults, helping Father at the work bench and so on, can also be preferred to TV. This of course depends on how attractive the programmes are, whether one is aware of their attraction and whether one knows they are being broadcast in the first place.

The interesting thing here is parental behaviour. If the children are out playing when the 4.30 programme starts, many parents call to the children to come indoors to watch TV. Even if they know by experience that the children do not like to stop their outdoor games to come inside and watch TV, there are still many par-

ents who call to the children that it is time for their programme.

There are several possible reasons for this behaviour. Either the parents think that the children can get more out of the TV programmes than out of their games, or else they are afraid that their children will be disappointed if they miss a programme. After all, once a programme has been missed, that is that. Or else the parents want their children to come indoors, sit down in front of the TV and "calm down before dinner".

Whatever the explanation one chooses, the parents' behaviour must lead the children to believe that they regard TV as something important, something which justifies the interruption of practically any activity.

We already know that TV has a great power to change people's living habits. But viewing is to a great extent dependent on the social situation in which one lives, and this naturally applies to children as well. But which factor is most influential - broadcasting times or programme content? Various choices between viewing and other activities occur at different times of the day. And of course children, like adults, have their programme preferences. But children also have to conform to the situation and habits of adults.

Earlier surveys have shown that the average viewing of children's programmes varies a great deal depending on the times at which they are broadcast. Earlier programmes have smaller audiences than later ones. Where the earlier programmes are concerned, the decisions of both parents and children may also be influenced by their knowledge that there will be other programme later in the evening.

During the first years of life, children are completely dependent on their parents, other adults or brothers and sisters where the choice of TV programmes is concerned. Eventually they start to become more aware of the times when different programmes are

broadcast, and they begin asking about TV of their own accord. Although children's viewing is often governed by other factors besides programme preferences, they do have preferences of a very definite kind. The great majority of pre-school children mention programmes for the very young as their favourites. The content of the programmes mentioned by the children in our survey varies a great deal, ranging from strictly informative to imaginative, activating and emotionally stimulating programmes. Our results also show that children do not prefer a certain kind of children's programme at a certain age. A child who likes a programme of still pictures can also enjoy an adult western. Nor do children simply enumerate programmes that have been broadcast recently; programmes that were broadcast a long time ago can also be quoted as favourites. Children's programmes and adult programmes are mentioned with equal frequency by all age groups.

Since children seldom have anybody to read subtitles to them or even to explain the programmes to them, one wonders what they can get out of watching programmes with subtitles. The child's evaluation of a programme of this kind can be very much influenced by its pictorial content and by the fact that the family or certain members of the family gather to watch a particular programme.

EFFECTS OF TV, GENERALLY

If parents are asked to observe their children while watching a TV programme and then to notice whether a child does something which has presumably been inspired by the programme, one almost always obtains evidence showing that a large proportion of children are influenced by a programme, almost irrespective of its content or form. But if parents are asked the more general question whether they have noticed any influence from TV programmes, the answers obtained are fairly "negative". Even if parents are asked - as they were in this survey - to observe their children for a considerable period of time, very few concrete examples of influence are reported.

Does this mean that children are not very profoundly affected by TV after all? Yet most parents say that children learn a great deal from TV.

We do not confine our definition of the effects of TV on the child to the way in which the child itself is influenced by different TV programmes. Parents, brothers and sisters can also be influenced in such a way as to affect the child's situation. This influence can be exerted directly through TV or indirectly in that TV influences the family via the children and can transform living habits and behavioural patterns in the family. Innumerable examples have been quoted previously of the direct influence exerted on children by TV programmes, but most of these examples have been confined to readily observable short-term effects.

It has also been possible to trace somewhat more long-term effects: children have learned to count and write letters of the alphabet, they play games which are inspired by TV programmes, they are inspired by TV to ask questions about different phenomena. We know that TV programmes frighten many children and give them nightmares. Both unpleasant and seemingly harmless scenes can frighten a child. This applies to both children's programmes and programmes for adults. And it can apply both to things which children understand and things which they cannot interpret.

But as soon as we turn to consider the effect of TV on children's norms and values things become far more complicated. TV is an authority. Among both adults and children there is widespread confidence in what is said and shown on TV. In every context, moreover, the very young have difficulty in distinguishing between fact and fantasy. Many children believe that everything on TV is documentary. Because they themselves have had so little experience, there are many things about which they have not had time to develop an appreciation. Therefore they have quite a different susceptibility from adults and older children to what is said and done on TV. Our survey hints that children sometimes believe more in impressions gained from TV than they believe in their parents: "M. (5 years old)

believes what he has seen on TV. He thinks there are cowboys walking around on the streets in America, and when we try to tell him that this is not so, he will not believe us."

On previous occasions we have been able to show how TV programmes for children have influenced and activated parents. For instance, people have very often bought or borrowed books featured in TV programmes. The series entitled "Five Ants" encouraged parents to go in for arithmetic and conceptual training. Sometimes TV programmes have also inspired parents to talk to their children about such delicate matters as where babies come from, why people die, and handicaps of various kinds. But at the same time as TV boosts book buying and book borrowing in certain cases, our results show that it can have a devastating effect on reading itself: "Now they can watch Drutten[1] and the Crocodile there's no need to read them a bedtime story". Not only does reading go by the board, the bedtime routine and contact between parents and children may be curtailed into the bargain. TV programmes often disrupt family rules concerning the children's bedtime.

PARENTAL ATTITUDES TO TV

Most of the parents in this study are highly positive or uncritical in their attitude to children and TV. Whereas they themselves, especially the mothers, regard TV almost solely in terms of entertainment and relaxation, practically all of them say that the children learn things by watching TV. On the other hand it is hard to elicit concrete examples of what the children have actually learned by watching TV.

Although parents have such a positive fundamental attitude to TV, it almost comes more easily to them to quote negative effects.

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1) A character in a popular series for small children included in the programme "Sveriges Magasin" (a combined talk-show and magazine programme, broadcast five evenings per week).

This may be because they very seldom actually see the programmes of which they expect such a great deal, i.e. children's programmes. Since they do not know the content of the programmes, it is hard for them to know which aspects of the child's behaviour are inspired by TV programmes and which are not.

The results of this survey confirm previous findings that frightening effects seem to result from children's programmes just as often as they result from programmes for adults. And yet parents are only concerned to protect children from what they themselves consider to be programmes of violence, i.e. programmes such as crime films, war programmes, westerns and other programmes which are broadcast quite late in the evening. Most of our parents seem to accept without complaint the fact that their children are sometimes frightened by children's programmes.

It is definitely impossible to make children's programmes completely "safe for children". What one can do is to draw parents' attention to the fact that children's programmes can <u>also</u> frighten certain children, and that if children do not spontaneously describe the programmes they have seen, one can encourage them to do so.

THE EFFECTS OF TV ON DIFFERENT GROUPS OF CHILDREN

Children build their picture of reality on their previous experience and knowledge, bit by bit. Their experience may have been acquired in real life, i.e. first hand experience. Or again TV can furnish children with experience which they can build on, either with the aid of further experience communicated by TV or by experience gained in real life.

As we saw earlier, lack of stimulus in different fields and disturbances in the child itself can set up barriers to new information and experience. Children, like adults, interpret new information or experience things on the basis of previous experience. If the new information is too far removed from the child's reality, it will not be assimilated.

What effects does TV have on insecure and uncertain children? On the unconcentrated and active? On the sluggish and unenterprising who never dare to ask about anything? On the mobbed and isolated? On the linguistically handicapped? On immigrant children?

For instance, a programme on divorce will doubtless make two very different impressions on an insecure child and a child with a greater measure of self-assurance. A child who may well be perturbed by a programme of this kind but who works on the problem, either by asking its parents or by talking the matter over with friends or other adults, has not been harmed by the programme. But what about an insecure child who, not daring to ask anybody, goes and broods on the problem in solitude? Can this type of child be reassured by a happy ending in a TV programme? Many programmes need following up if they are to have a positive instead of a negative effect.

Inquisitive, extrovert children who ask a lot of questions always get to know more than those who do not ask. Not content with seeing things which they do not understand, they try to find out how things really hang together. The result of their inquiries will, of course, depend on the success of those around them in explaining things. Children who do not ask and do not display their reactions to programmes are more likely to misinterpret programmes or to fail to understand them, unless people around them spontaneously talk about the content of the programmes.

It is obvious that TV presents many hazards and shortcomings, depending on how the programmes are received. They do not always have the intended effect. What is the best way of utilizing TV for children? How is one to reach different categories? If "reach" implies that all children watch the programme, it is possible to reach every child. By the same definition one can reach practically all parents - both the stimulated and those who lack stimulus of various kinds.

There is no doubt that TV can provide children with intellectual stimulus. But the danger is that children will acquire fragmen-

tary knowledge of a large number of subjects while still having difficulty in comprehending causal arguments and trains of thought and in applying their knowledge to a concrete situation. Surveys concerning adults and their ways of deriving information from, say, a news broadcast of traditional kind have shown that their greatest difficulty lies in remembering the cause and effects of an event, while on the other hand they have less difficulty in remembering the time and place of an event. Similarly, prosocial behaviour has proved more difficult to teach than asocial behaviour.

To strike a balance, therefore, programmes have to stress certain things more than others. But in adjusting programmes one often detracts from the description of reality. Can TV provide social stimulus? It can doubtless give a great deal to both children and adults. TV can show environments, people and production processes. TV can prepare children for different situations and teach them how society works. But can TV induce children to experience their own function when the persons around them have failed to do so?

Can TV give children emotional stimulus? We know that children's empathy with events on the TV screen can be extremely powerful. But can the involvement they have felt regarding persons or beings or phenomena in TV be applied to things outside the world of TV, in their own reality or perhaps a little further away from themselves?

It is not until they are some way into the school years that children acquire such a capacity of generalizing to other situations besides their own. But it is conceivable that even small children can store impressions material to their subsequent ability to feel involvement on behalf of other persons besides themselves and situations besides those with which they can identify directly.

Showing how other people think and feel and why they react as they do must be a task which TV can cope with - partly because real life people seldom open out and talk about their true feelings, motives and reactions, and partly because they themsleves may not

be aware of these things and may sublimate them and rationalize them out of existence.

TV can possibly help children to find ways of expressing their own feelings, thoughts and experiences and of "widening the children's emotional spectrum". "Perhaps too TV can give children insight into ways in which people can understand each other better", but it is doubtful whether this will make children understand other people better.

TV also wishes to stimulate imagination and the emotions as well as creative thought. To what extent does TV stimulate imagination? We know little about the way in which children react and function in this respect. One might expect unknown and unconventional pictures to stimulate children's imagination. But in order to think creatively the child needs a firm, familiar point of departure for its associations. For this reason imaginative things have to be linked to something well known, whether the audience consists of children or adults.

THE ROLE OF RADIO

There was a time when nearly all children listened to the children's programmes on the radio. Today about one-fifth of all children between the ages of three and six listen more or less regularly to these programmes. Have children's radio programmes been ousted by TV or by records and cassettes? Or by the attractive light music in other radio channels? Is it the children's attitudes to children's radio programmes that have changed or their parents' attitudes?

Children are almost entirely dependent on parents or some other adult where the choice of radio programmes and radio channels is concerned. During the early years at least, the listening habits of the very young are wholly determined by the attitudes and listening habits of their parents, especially their mothers.

Radio programmes for the very young are broadcast in the mornings on P1 (a speech channel) and during the afternoons on P3 (the "Melody Radio" light music channel). The morning programmes have a more regular and faithful audience than the afternoon ones. The afternoon programmes are something that people "just happen to hear".

In this survey we have established that the mothers of the listening children have certain features in common which are more personal than socio-economic in character. They are generally active and quite extrovert, they have a positive attitude towards their children and towards being together with them, they like reading to their children or encourage the children to read for themselves, but for their own part they are not of a very intellectual turn of mind. They themselves are interested in other radio channels than P3, and a particularly large number of them listen to a family magazine programme called "Familjespegeln".[1] They take a positive view of children and radio: "Children need to learn how to listen as well, instead of just looking at pictures". The listening children themselves do not display any special characteristics.

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1) "The Family Mirror"

To the majority of children, like their parents, radio mostly means music. It is a background noise dispelling silence. To the children it is often timeless. At practically any time of day one can tune in and hear music. Sometimes one can hear a children's song or even a children's story. But the children's programmes on the radio are not the sort of thing that mothers call their children indoors for when they are out playing or even when they are doing something else indoors. Thus radio is not felt to be sufficiently important for people to drop what they are doing and listen. On the contrary, children like to be occupied with something else while they are listening. And there are very few parents indeed who switch over from one channel to another so that the children can listen to a children's programme. Most of them do not know the times of programmes. It is true that the older of the pre-school children sometimes turn on the radio themselves in order to listen, but this is usually because they miss the music and not because they want to hear a children's programme.

Radio profoundly influences the children's musical taste, like that of their parents. But does this mean that the same musical taste will be permanent? Which children later come to discover more advanced music and spoken radio programmes? Are the children who often listen to spoken programmes endowed from the very beginning with a superior ability to concretize the spoken word and a greater store of imagination? Or do they acquire these qualities when they are trained to listen?

Radio has to compete with records, cassettes and tape recorders. Use of these media shows that many other children besides the faithful radio listeners enjoy listening to fairy tales, stories and dramatizations. But records and cassettes are considered more important than radio broadcasts, perhaps because they have to be bought before they can be listened to, and perhaps because the hearing of them is preceded by an active decision (the children or their parents).

P3 ("Melody Radio"), not other mass media, still remains the most formidable rival of Children's Radio. Since most parents, and

children themselves, are most interested in "Melody Radio", Children's Radio has a "dual" competition to face up to. If Children's Radio is timed in such a way that children are given the opportunity of listening to it, a more balanced and variegated picture will be conveyed of what radio has to offer, and children themselves will be enabled to choose. The aim of Children's Radio to reach above all the least stimulated children cannot be realized under the present conditions.

OTHER MASS MEDIA

If mass media are arranged in ranking order according to the frequency with which they are used (without any consideration as to how actively they are used), radio comes first and TV comes next. Books and comics come third, followed by gramophone records. Preschool children do not go to the cinema very often, the reason doubtless being that there is so little for them to see. Weeklies and, above all, daily newspapers play a diminutive part in the media picture of the pre-school child. All these observations are confirmed by our survey.

The use of mass media by pre-school children is subject to certain natural restrictions. Because pre-school children cannot read for themselves, their use of newspapers and books is dependent on others reading to them or on the newspapers and books containing pictures which speak for themselves.

To a great extent they are dependent on adults for information concerning the possibilities open to them, and they themselves are unable to influence the availability of different media. The older a child grows, the more easily it can influence its own media situation, but the introduction of different media by those around it still plays an important part. Certain media become more and more readily available as a child grows older, as with TV and radio, which the child learns to turn on by itself, while other media, such as the cinema, demand a great deal of co-operation from adults in order for the child to have access to them.

The books owned by the child and its family are often taken as one of several measurements of the intellectual status of the family. Here as with other media, however, one has to look to the manner of use as much as to the actual frequency of use. Books can be used in many different ways. The child itself may look at them frequently or infrequently. People may read to the child frequently or infrequently. The same book may be read over and over again, or new books may be constantly bought or borrowed.

Books can be chosen in different ways: with reference to familiar subjects or figures or with reference to unfamiliar ones. Books can be chosen to suit a situation in a child's life, as for instance when there is a baby on the way. A book can be chosen for its nice pictures, because it does not contain too much text, because it has been broadcast on radio or TV and so on.

If many books of variegated content are read to the child, this can broaden the child's range of experience and help it to break new ground. If the same book is read again and again, the child does not gain new experience from the reading, but the reading fulfils another emotional function instead. Of course it is also possible for these two functions to be combined.

All the children in our families have come into contact with books, one way or another. We find that parents of children with many books of their own tend more often to read to them, irrespective of whether they are in the habit of going to the library or not. On the other hand hardly anybody ever reads to the children who have few books of their own and who never borrow books from the library. Many of the parents who read little or nothing at all themselves are still interested in reading to their children and encourage them to read.

In our survey, it is the parents who are not very interested in their children or their development who seldom read to them. Their standards of upbringing are often more lax, or else they do not believe in their own ability to contribute towards their children's development. Instead these children often become heavy con-

sumers of TV and, sometimes, of comics as well. In this case the comics are not always bought solely for the children's sake - the parents too may derive a great deal of pleasure from them. "If O. (the father) is supposed to read to him, he suddenly goes quiet and starts reading to himself. So I have to read to M. instead."

Many of the parents regard reading to their children as a somewhat tiresome duty. With varying degrees of conviction, they regard TV as an adequate substitute for reading. Some of them also use the radio/tape recorder or gramophone as a deliberate substitute for reading. Very few children are uninterested in being read to. As far as our material is concerned, it is the very restless children who seem to have difficulty in concentrating and who have a great need of movement.

Most children come into contact with comics at a very early age, not through the medium of newspapers and magazines (which might be the most natural way), but because people buy them comics. Only 5 per cent of the children in our survey never bought or read comics. Usually it is parents who buy comics for their children, but there are also cases where children take over comics from older relatives or friends. Parents seem to regard comics as easy reading for children of all ages, and they buy comics for their children, sometimes instead of sweets, and sometimes when they buy magazines for themselves.

Parents who often read to their children seldom buy them comics: they buy books instead. Often these parents take a negative view of comics. Even if they sometimes buy their children comics, they seldom read them to them.

Listening to gramophone records is nothing like as widespread as the use of most other mass media among our families. The very small children are seldom interested in anything except music records, but they already start to get interested in spoken records when they are 4. This makes an interesting comparison with children's radio programmes.

Listenings to records is encouraged more than listening to children's broadcasts on the radio. One wonder why, because the children ought to derive more or less the same enjoyment and benefit from both media. Perhaps the reason is that the choice and purchase of a record has required the initiative of parents or of somebody else. The hearing of a record is preceded by an active process of selection at a time chosen by the consumer, whereas a radio programme may come at a moment when children are not motivated for listening.

Among the 3 and 4-year-olds in our survey, it is the children who do not listen to radio broadcasts for children who often listen to gramophone records instead. Among the 5 and 6-year-olds it is more or less the same children who often listen to children's radio broadcasts and often listen to records.

The children's interest in magazines appears to be outstripped by the actual incidence of magazines in their homes, and the same applies to newspapers.

The children in our survey have quite considerable opportunities of going to the cinema, even if they live in the suburbs. But the range of films specially addressed to pre-school children is relatively limited. Because the supply is so small, it is only natural if a 3 or 4-year-old does not ever go to the cinema. In fact our survey revealed 3, 4 and 5-year-olds who had never been to the cinema. Altogether about one-fifth of the children have never seen a cinema film. All the 6-year-olds have been to the cinema at some time or other.

With the exception of one mother who is extremely religious, none of the parents have any negative views concerning children and the cinema. On the other hand they do not credit the cinema with any very positive functions either; it is sheer entertainment. Sometimes it has also transpired that a child has had difficulty in sitting still all the way through a film or has found it boring and actually fallen asleep.

DISCUSSION

We live in a complex world. There is great volume of information about this world, but that information does not always make the world less complex. TV provides the individual with a large proportion of his or her information about the immediate outside world. It has also broadened the horizons of the very young. Time was when parents or other people around the child could teach it everything it needed to know. Today parents are often as ignorant and uncertain as their children.

Even the content of children's programmes is often as unfamiliar or novel to the parents as it is to their children. For instance, stories about children in other countries can be as enlightening to a parent as to a child. In this way parents often lose their authority, and if children go on to ask questions about unfamiliar things, the parents are unable to answer, or at least unable to give cogent answers.

The positive effects of TV can be reinforced and the negative effects alleviated by talking about the programmes afterwards, by talking about one's feelings and impressions. This is essential to the memorization of a programme experience. One of the reasons for the great family response aroused by programmes like "Five Ants are More than Four Elephants" is that they deal with problems within the knowledge and experience of every parents (and elder child). What is more, parents know that these are things which they will have to teach their children sooner or later.

The less stimulated children are and the more constricted their reality, the greater as a rule is the scope available to TV, both in relation to the children themselves and in relation to their families. But parental interest often focuses on the TV <u>instead of</u> the children. True, they often watch programmes together with their children, but they watch programmes for adults and <u>not</u> children's programmes. On these terms TV does not become the extra "resource" it is intended to be. On the contrary it becomes a shackle to the child who does not derive positive benefit from its parents' viewing.

If the children themselves, their parents and others around them do not talk about the content of programmes, should TV do it? A programme announcer who sometimes appears after the end of children's programmes often adopts this approach. But many children are uninterested in what the programme announcer has to say after the programme, and they go away from the TV set as soon as the actual programme is over.

Programmes such as "Five Ants" and "From A to Z" are one method of capturing more parents than usually watch children's programmes. One can accomplish a certain amount by making children's programmes so attractive that parents and other persons will watch them together with the children, not for the children's sake but for the sake of the programmes themselves. The more familiar parents are with the area which is being dealt with, the more predisposed they will presumably be to talk about it.

But other, more complex problems such as mobbing, divorce, sex roles of different kinds and interpersonal problems of all kinds are perhaps less easy to deal with. Even if parents watch these programmes, one cannot be sure that they will talk about them afterwards. With programmes of this kind is less natural for parents to take the cue and proffer explanations, especially if they have problems of their own in these respects or if they are undecided concerning their own attitudes and convictions.

What can then be done to reach both parents and children and induce them to communicate with each other about the programmes and - perhaps more important still - about other things besides the programmes? A televised school for parents is one solution about which there has been a great deal of discussion, but to many people programmes of this kind might have a positively deterrent effect. What programmes do people talk about anyway? Often they are serials or series, more often still those of an entertaining kind. Dramatized programmes of this kind can in principle be made to deal with problems and issues of all varieties.

A great deal of what a programme tries to say goes in one ear and out the other. The knowledge and impressions gained by children and adults are often fragmentary because they are unable to assimilate all they see and hear. In this way, radio and TV can contribute towards an "over-stimulus" and can aggravate the lack of an integral view, overriding values and a community of ideas.

We have seen how parents who themselves feel isolated and understimulated have difficulty in stimulating their children. To many parents TV is the sole source of stimulus. But children should be the concern of everybody, not only of their parents. Can radio and TV be used to increase understanding and, consequently, interest with regard to children and parents? Is it ultimately possible to raise the level of interest and understanding in the community as a whole? If radio and TV are to be capable of achieving anything positive from the children's viewpoint, this objective must not be confined to the producers of children's programmes. Without the assistance of the producers of programmes for adults, the way ahead will be virtually impassable.